

Is child fire play and

Setting a problem?

Fires set by young children in the U.S. annually result in:

- 41,900 fires
- 165 deaths
- 1,900 injuries
- \$272 million in property damage

Is juvenile arson

a problem?

- 55% of all arson arrests in the U.S. are children under 18
- Nearly half of these are age 15 and under
- 6.8% are under the age of 10
- The crime of arson has the highest rate of juvenile involvement
- 15% of wildfires in NJ are identified as being caused by children
- An increasing number of structure fires in NJ are caused by children

Who should be involved?

Everyone in the community...

Parents and caregivers, local fire and police agencies, mental health counselors and social services, juvenile justice, schools, churches, medical community, youth service workers, public and private business, insurance industry, and other community leaders.

Fire safety tips

- Teach children from a young age that fire is a *tool for adults— not a toy!*
- When children are older, begin teaching them the proper uses of fire.
- Teach children not to touch any matches or lighters .
- Set a good example. Children learn fire safety from others.
- Teach your baby sitters about fire safety. Have a list of emergency numbers posted.
- Make your home fire-safe, inside and out!

Compliments of



**NJ FOREST
FIRE SERVICE**

www.njwildfire.org



FEMA

www.fema.gov



**NJ DIVISION
OF FIRE
SAFETY**

www.nj.gov/dca/dfs

Juvenile Firesetting

AWARENESS

"CURIOSITY ABOUT FIRE IS
NATURAL FOR CHILDREN..."



SETTING FIRE IS NOT!!!"

**NJ JUVENILE FIRESETTER
HOTLINE**

1-800-357-5230

What is juvenile firesetting?

Each year in New Jersey, hundreds of potentially deadly fires are started by children. At some point during childhood, most become curious about fire. Experts generally agree that fire setting after the age of 8 is almost always deliberate, and without appropriate intervention, can result in injury or death.



Whether they are started inside the home or out, most of these fires could be prevented if parents were better informed about the hazards of leaving cigarette lighters and matches within the reach of young children.

It is a fact that most of these fires could be prevented through a program that includes; fire safety education, awareness and counseling regarding children and fire.

"The first step in solving the problem is to understand better which children set fires and why they do it."

Why do children set fires?

Curiosity / Experimental

- Boys and girls ages 2 to 10 (sometimes less)
- Lack understanding of the destructive potential of fire
- Ready access to lighters, matches, or open flames
- Unsupervised

Troubled Firesetters

- Boys & girls of all ages
- May have set two or more fires
- May use fire to express anger, sadness, frustration, powerless feelings related to stress or major changes in their life
- May not understand the consequences of uncontrolled fire
- Will likely set fires until needs are identified and met
- Also known as "crisis" or "cry for help" firesetters

Delinquent / Criminal

- Usually teens with a history of fire setting, truancy, antisocial behavior, or drug/alcohol abuse
- Fires are set with intent to destroy, or as acts of vandalism and malicious mischief
- Targets are typically schools, open fields and forests, dumpsters, or abandoned buildings

Emotionally Disturbed

- Fire may be random, ritualized, or with specific intent to destroy property (arson)
- Chronic history of school behavioral, social, or physical problems
- Boys and girls of all ages
- Set many fires
- Problem is likely to continue without intervention

What are the Signs to look for in your child?

- An interest in fire
- Questions about flammable objects and how they burn
- Matches or lighters found in their pockets or hidden in their room
- Unexplained findings of charred paper or burnt matches found in wastebaskets, toilets or sinks, or outside your home
- Remnants of small fires in or around your home

What can you do if you need help?

If you have reason to believe that your child is setting fires, take immediate action. Start by contacting the NJ Juvenile Fire Setting Hotline.

1-800-357-5230

How does the hotline work?

- Hotline guides caller to the Firesetter program closest to the family's home
- The responsible agency screens the child & parents to determine the risk level of fire setting behavior
- Referral to a mental health facilitator may be recommended in some cases
- In almost every case, fire safety education is recommended
- Parental involvement is an important part of the equation